

EFFECTIVE TASKING AND DEPLOYMENT OF THE SPECIAL CONSTABULARY: SOME POINTS TO CONSIDER

The Special Constabulary is generally a well trained and willing resource which, if used properly, can greatly increase the effectiveness of the police service. Exit interviews and other research indicate that under utilisation and lack of variety of work is causing SC Officers to leave or reduce their hours. Below are some points to consider, gleaned from forces who demonstrated the value of effective deployment and tasking of the Special Constabulary.

TASKING

Planning and managing the activities of the Special Constabulary will enhance their fulfilment of the role and the feeling of being valued, as well as ensuring they are directed towards force priorities. Subsequently SC Officers will go out on their deployment more motivated and more likely to deliver an effective service that meets the local policing objectives of the force. The Special Constabulary should be seen as part of the force's overall resources and taken into account at NIM (National Intelligence Model) Tasking and Coordination meetings.

Duty planning

Having reliable up to date information about the availability of SC Officers is a key part of the process in ensuring that when they come on duty, they are briefed and deployed efficiently and effectively. Some forces have internet based systems which SC Officers can log onto to define their working hours and pass the information to line managers. The system can also be used to send text messages or e-mails to SC Officers to ask them to come on duty or task them for specific work, as well as recording working hours and work undertaken, thereby saving administration time.

Briefing

SC Officers can often start their shift at differing times to that of the regular officers and therefore the briefing can easily be missed. Without a clear briefing, the opportunity for the SC Officers to make effective use of their time on duty is more limited. A process for briefing, which may include self briefing through the use of the intranet, or organising a specific briefing meeting for the start of the SC Officers shift, should optimise the SC Officers contribution to achievement of force objectives.

Nominated and appropriate line management

Each force will have a different approach to line management of the Special Constabulary depending on force policy around their deployment. Whatever the supervisory model, it is important someone is taking responsibility for managing SC Officers at the time they are on duty, ensuring their welfare, effective use and (most importantly for our volunteer force) thanking them for their work.

Equipping

When coming on duty, it is good for the force, for the SC Officer and for the public that the officer is able to get out on deployment as soon as possible. As well as having a clear briefing to guide effective deployment, ensuring the right equipment, including radios & personal safety equipment, is readily available without complication or delay has a greater chance of ensuring the SC Officer can undertake their duty safely and do so feeling valued and motivated.

Training

Whilst Special Constabulary recruits generally receive a good basic training, there is still a requirement to provide on-going training and also ensure training updates, for example for personal safety training, and new IT systems. Making appropriate training available to SC Officers and actively managing attendance will assist in ensuring SC Officers have up to date skills and will broaden the range of deployments they can undertake.

DEPLOYMENT

Once the Special or group of SC Officers is tasked based on their availability, they are more likely to attend the duty. This now brings a whole set of thoughts around the successful deployment of the task.

Allocating 'problems and hot spots' to SC Officers or teams of SC Officers

Gaining commitment through ownership helps the force to achieve an outcome and also allows the problem to be seen from a different perspective. Results can be documented, so everyone can see the contribution being made by the Special Constabulary.

Training teams of SC Officers to be deployed as and when required for specific tasks

Some forces have trained groups of SC Officers to be called upon as teams as and when required, to support and be guided by a smaller number of regular officers. Team roles include prisoner handling teams for football matches and public order situations, car boot raid teams working with Trading standards, teams executing warrants, licensed premises/test purchaser observation teams, ANPR/Drink Drive campaign support teams, house to house enquiry/elimination fingerprint and DNA teams. The training requirement for these roles is not extensive, but they are activities which can require large numbers of officers, potentially causing a drain on the regular force.

Using the talents of the SC Officers from their non-policing background

Some forces have allocated specialist roles/activities to individuals who have skills which the force can make use of. For example, mechanic as vehicle examiner, accountant as fraud investigator, technology specialist fitting covert surveillance equipment, farmer as wildlife officer, Gym Instructor as personal safety trainer for SC Officers, Polish speaker as an interpreter. This can be an opportunity of motivating the SC Officer and providing a greater sense of value to their role, as well as the force gaining from the individual's expertise.

Cross border support

Special Constables have full policing powers and these can be used across force boundaries. Utilising the Special Constabulary as mutual aid or on cross-border operations will assist with any drain on resources within the home force. In addition, policing resources for planned festivals, events or gatherings can be supplemented with the use of the SC Officers from neighbouring forces.